Northwest Regional Office
Salmon Recovery Division
National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA Fisheries

Puget Sound Region Hatchery EIS

Introduction

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is inviting public involvement in the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pertaining to salmon and steelhead hatchery programs in the Puget Sound region. Two Resource Management Plans (Plans) have been submitted to the NMFS by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Puget Sound Treaty Tribes (referred to as the co-managers). One Plan discusses hatchery programs that produce chinook salmon. The other Plan describes steelhead, coho, pink, chum, and sockeye hatchery programs.

The Resource Management Plans are the proposed frameworks through which the co-managers would jointly manage Puget Sound region salmon and steelhead hatchery programs while meeting conservation requirements specified under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Plans describe 113 hatchery programs and evaluate their effects on Puget Sound chinook and summer chum populations protected as threatened species under the ESA. In addition, the Plans describe the scientific foundation and general principles for continued innovation in response to new information. Appended to the Plans are individual Hatchery and Genetic Management Plans (HGMPs) for each of the 113 hatchery programs. The HGMPs describe each hatchery program in more detail, including specific measures for research, monitoring, and evaluation activities that would guide future program adjustments.

NMFS' ESA determination on the co-managers' Resource Management Plans is the federal action requiring National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance. Consistent with NEPA, a single EIS will be prepared for the two Plans. NMFS' NEPA determination for the Plans will be in effect for 15 years. The EIS will consider potential impacts on listed and non-listed animal and plant species and their habitats, water quality and quantity, socioeconomics, and environmental justice. The EIS will also include information regarding potential impacts on other components of the human environment, including air quality, human health, transportation, and cultural resources.

NMFS will rigorously explore and objectively evaluate a full range of reasonable alternatives in the EIS, including the Proposed Action (implementation of the co-managers' Resource Management Plans)

You Are Invited - Public Scoping Meetings

Date	Time	Location
June 7, 2004	6 - 8:30 PM	Public Utility District No. 1 of Skagit County, 1415 Freeway Drive, **Mount Vernon, Washington.**
June 8, 2004	6 - 8:30 PM	NOAA Office, 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Building 9 Auditorium, **Seattle, Washington.**
June 14, 2004	6 - 8:30 PM	Mary E. Theler Community Center, 2871 NE State Route 3, **Belfair, Washington.**
June 15, 2004	6 - 8:30 PM	Jefferson County Public Library, 620 Cedar Avenue, **Port Hadlock, Washington.**

and a No Action alternative. Additional alternatives could include the following: (1) a decrease in artificial production in selected programs that have a primary goal of augmenting fisheries, and (2) an increase in artificial production in selected programs that have a primary goal of augmenting fisheries.

Get Involved

Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties to ensure that the EIS considers the full range of related issues and alternatives to the proposed action. NMFS requests that comments be as specific as possible. In particular, NMFS requests information regarding: other possible alternatives; the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that implementation of the proposed Resource Management Plans could have on endangered and threatened species and their animal community structures and habitats; potential adaptive management and/or monitoring provisions; baseline environmental conditions in Clallam, Island, King, Kitsap, Jefferson, Mason, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom Counties; other plans or projects that might be relevant to this proposed project; and potential methods to minimize and mitigate for impacts.

Comments may be submitted in writing or may be given verbally at any of the four public meetings that will be held in the Puget Sound region. All comments and materials received, including names and addresses, will become part of the administrative record and may be released to the public. Questions may be directed to Allyson Ouzts with NMFS at (503) 736-4736.

Submit Written Comments

Please send your comments in writing to Allyson Ouzts at NMFS by US mail, electronic mail, or fax no later than July 10th, 2004 at the following address or number:

525 NE Oregon Street, Suite 510
Portland, OR 97232
Fax: (503) 872-2737
e-mail: PShatcheryEIS.nwr@noaa.gov

Project Location

The hatchery programs included in this project are located in the Puget Sound region. Major watersheds that may be affected by the programs include the Nooksack, Skagit, Stillaguamish, Snohomish, Lake Washington, Green, Puyallup, Nisqually, Skokomish, Dosewallips, Duckabush, Hamma Hamma, Dungeness, and Elwha. Hatchery facilities are located both in the river systems and adjacent marine areas.

Background Information

The ESA contains several sections that set the foundation for managing listed species. Section 9(a)(1) of the ESA makes it illegal for any person subject to United States juristiction to "take" ESA listed Pacific salmon without written authorization from NMFS. The term “take” is defined under the ESA as to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct (16 U.S.C. 1532(19)). NMFS’ definition of harm includes significant habitat modification or degradation where it kills or injures fish or wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, which include breeding, feeding, spawning, migrating, rearing, and sheltering (64 FR 60727, November 8, 1999).

Section 4(d) of the ESA discusses the treatment of species listed as threatened. It states that, whenever a species is listed as threatened, the Secretary of Commerce “shall issue such regulations as he deems necessary and advisable to provide for the conservation of the species.” Such protective regulations may include any or all of the prohibitions that apply automatically to protect endangered species under ESA section 9.

NMFS listed both Puget Sound chinook salmon and Hood Canal summer chum salmon as threatened under the ESA in March, 1999 (64 FR 14308). In 2000, ESA section 9 take prohibitions became effective. However NMFS issued regulations referred to as 4(d) Limits that specified categories of activities under which section 9 take prohibitions may not apply when activities are governed by programs that adequately protect ESA-listed salmon and steelhead. State and tribal governments conducting jointly-managed hatchery or fishery activities are not subject

to ESA section 9 take prohibitions provided that those activities are implemented under a Resource Management Plan that meets the criteria referenced in Limit 6 of the 4(d) Rule.

The co-managers have jointly submitted to NMFS two Resource Management Plans for evaluation under Limit 6 of the 4(d) Rule. One Plan describes hatchery programs that produce chinook salmon, and the other describes programs that produce coho salmon, steelhead, pink salmon, sockeye salmon, and fall-run chum salmon.

The Plans must satisfy Limit 6 criteria for threatened Puget Sound chinook and Hood Canal summer chum salmon. The Puget Sound chinook salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU; NMFS' biological unit for listing) includes all naturally spawned spring-, summer-, and fall-runs of chinook salmon in the Puget Sound region from the North Fork Nooksack River, extending into south Puget Sound, Hood Canal, and the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, including the Elwha River on the Olympic Peninsula. Listed Puget Sound chinook salmon are found in portions of Clallam, Island, King, Kitsap, Jefferson, Mason, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Thurston, and Whatcom Counties in Washington State. The Hood Canal summer chum salmon ESU includes all naturally spawned summer-run chum salmon in tributaries to Hood Canal and Discovery, Sequim, and Dungeness Bays in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca. This ESU is located in portions of Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason Counties of Washington State.

Project Issues

The EIS will address the following potential issues:

Salmonids

Chinook, pink, sockeye, chum, coho, and steelhead are found within the project area. How will hatchery operations under the Resource Management Plans positively or negatively affect the distribution, diversity, and abundance of the various populations? Are there any hatchery barriers that prevent adult salmon and steelhead from migrating upstream? Are hatchery fish preserving the existence of any salmonid populations? Are the hatchery fish preying upon wild fish and/or competing for their food or space? Are hatchery fish interbreeding with wild fish and making wild fish less able to survive and reproduce? What are the effects of hatchery broodstock collection on wild populations? Are hatchery fish transferring disease to wild salmonids?

Other Fish and Wildlife

Many other fish and wildlife species are found in the project area, including bald eagles, otters, gulls, and bull trout. How will hatchery operations under the Resource Management Plans impact these other fish and wildlife species? Will the Plans lead to an increase or decrease in the availability of food for these species? Are any predator control practices applied at the hatcheries that may impact wildlife?

Water Quality and Quantity

Hatcheries withdraw and release water used for fish rearing into streams and rivers. What are the impacts of this effluent on water quality? How does sedimentation associated with net pen operations impact water quality?

Socio-Economics and Tribal Treaty Trust Responsibilities

Puget Sound Tribes largely depend on hatchery fish for the meaningful exercise of treaty-guaranteed fishing rights. These fishing rights entitle the tribes to commercial, ceremonial, and subsistence fisheries. How are treaty fishing rights affected by hatchery production? What is the cultural value of hatchery fish to the Puget Sound Treaty Tribes? How do hatchery fish affect the socioeconomics of other communities?

Human Health

Hatchery staff use several chemicals to control diseases in hatchery fish. These chemicals include formalin and MS222. Are these chemicals used in ways that pose a risk to human health?

Environmental Justice

Will hatchery operations under the Resource Management Plans or alternatives have disproportional impacts on lower income groups?

Air Quality and Transportation

Will hatchery operations under the Resource Management Plans have adverse impacts on air quality or transportation?

Recovery Planning

The ESA states that its purpose is to provide a program to bring any endangered or threatened species to the point that continued protection under the ESA is no longer necessary. It is NMFS policy to work collaboratively with local interests on such programs or recovery plans.

The Shared Strategy is a voluntary collaboration of federal, tribal, state, and local governments, and business and environmental organizations that is preparing a regional recovery plan for salmon in the Puget Sound. Watershed groups across the Sound are drafting recovery plans for their areas, and NMFS is working with Shared Strategy participants and the Puget Sound Technical Recovery Team to combine those plans into a single recovery plan for the ESU.

The recovery plan will address the integration of habitat, harvest, hydro-power, and hatcheries with natural processes (e.g., cyclic ocean conditions). The final Puget Sound Hatchery Resource Management Plans, evaluated through the NMFS' ESA and NEPA review processes, will be incorporated into the final Puget Sound region recovery plan.

Find Out More

The co-managers' Resource Management Plans, their associated HGMPs, and additional related information are available on the internet at ***www.nwr.noaa.gov***. Questions by phone may be directed to Allyson Ouzts with NMFS at (503) 736-4736.

NMFS
Salmon Recovery Division
525 NE Oregon Street, Suite 510
Portland, OR 97232